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**BAUCUS PROVISIONS IN FINAL BUDGET PROTECT SENIORS,
LOW-INCOME AMERICANS IN NEED OF HEALTH CARE**

*FY2009 blueprint also contains reserve fund for comparative effectiveness effort to
improve efficiency, quality of nation's health care system*

Washington, DC – The final conference report on the Fiscal Year 2009 budget, approved by the Senate today, includes a number of measures championed by Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) to improve the nation's health care system – from protecting seniors from unscrupulous marketing by private plans that serve Medicare beneficiary, to ensuring the availability of health care to low-income Americans through Medicaid, to learning what treatments work best and most efficiently to keep Americans healthy.

“More and more Americans are struggling to make health care fit into their own budgets, so it was important to pay attention to the health care system in Congress's budget this year,” said Baucus. **“I intend for the Finance Committee to make a major push for comprehensive health care reform next year, but in the meantime I wanted to direct dollars toward helping low-income Americans keep their health care, protecting seniors as they buy insurance plans offering Medicare benefits, and improving the health care system across the board.”**

A Baucus amendment to the budget creates a deficit-neutral reserve fund for legislation to implement marketing reforms in the Medicare program. Baucus and members of the Finance panel met with leaders of the nation's major insurance companies in March of this year to discuss banning unscrupulous marketing by Medicare plan and their agents, including “cold calls” and financial inducements to pressure seniors to enroll. The Finance Chairman's amendment provides a reserve funds to codify proposals from America's Health Insurance Plans and provisions from the rule promulgated by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to protect seniors in law from shady marketing practices.

On Medicaid, Baucus included in the budget a Sense of the Senate amendment underscoring the importance of the program as America's health care safety net. Specifically, the Baucus amendment expresses the Sense of the Senate that administrative regulations should not undermine the guarantee of health insurance coverage Medicaid provides or shift Medicaid cost burdens to state or local governments.

Also included in the budget are two reserve funds key to the Finance Committee's health care efforts this year. One reserve fund would promote comparative effectiveness efforts throughout the health care system. Comparative effectiveness initiatives can improve the quality of health care Americans receive by gathering and distributing information about the effectiveness of different health care treatments, and Baucus and Budget Committee Chairman Kent Conrad (D-N.D.) have indicated their intention to introduce legislation on the topic this year. Another reserve fund allows for improvements to low-income subsidy programs in Medicare – laying the groundwork for a strong Medicare bill currently under negotiation by Baucus and Finance leaders.

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